

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

EMPRESS OF THE NORTH
JUNEAU, ALASKA

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Docket No.: DCA-07-MM-015

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Interview of: BEN FRENCH

Empress of the North
Auke Bay, Alaska

Tuesday,
May 15, 2007

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice,
at 11:30 a.m.

BEFORE: MORGAN TURRELL

APPEARANCES:

MORGAN TURRELL, Operations Group Chairman
National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C.

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TIM FARLEY, U.S. Coast Guard
Office of Investigations and Analysis
Master Mariner participating in support of
NTSB Investigation

LIAM LARUE
National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C.

PAUL WEBB, U.S. Coast Guard
17th District

CHRIS JULIUS
National Transportation Safety Board
Deputy Director, Office of Marine Safety

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I N T E R V I E W

(11:30 a.m.)

MR. TURRELL: Okay, the recorder is on. This is Morgan Turrell. It's May 15th. It's, what time is it there? 11:15, 11:30? 11:30. We're onboard the Empress of the North. We're doing a crew interview. My first name is Morgan, the last name is Turrell, T-u-r-r-e-l-l. I'm the Operations Group Chairman. And to my left?

MR. CORBIJN: With no voice, Nico Corbijn. I'm the Senior Vice President of Marine Operations for Majestic America Lines. Last name C-o-r-b-i-j-n.

MR. WILHELM: Mark Wilhelm. I'm an attorney in Anchorage, Alaska with the law firm of Richmond and Quinn.

MR. TURRELL: Okay, and you're representing?

MR. WILHELM: I'm representing the witness.

MR. TURRELL: Okay, thank you. Ben?

MR. FRENCH: Ben French, Able Seaman, Empress of the North, Majestic America Lines.

MR. TURRELL: Okay. And I understand this attorney is representing you. Is that correct?

MR. FRENCH: Yes. Mark is, Mark Wilhelm.

MR. STRAUCH: Barry Strauch with the NTSB. I'm a human factor specialist. My last name is spelled S-t-r-a-u-c-h.

LT. BRIERLEY OSTRANDER: I'm Lieutenant J. G. Brierley Ostrander, from Sector Juneau. The spelling of the name is B-r-i-

1 e-r-l-e-y and Ostrander, O-s-t-r-a-n-d-e-r.

2 MR. FARLEY: I'm Tim Farley from the U.S. Coast Guard,
3 Office of Investigations and Analysis. I'm a Master Mariner
4 participating in support of the NTSB investigation. Last name
5 spelled F-a-r-l-e-y.

6 MR. LARUE: This is Liam Larue from NTSB. The last name
7 is spelled Larue.

8 MR. WEBB: Paul Webb from 17th Coast Guard District.
9 Last name, W-e-b-b.

10 MR. JULIUS: Chris Julius, Office of Marine Safety,
11 Deputy Director.

12 INTERVIEW OF BEN FRENCH

13 BY MR. TURRELL:

14 Q. Okay, Ben, if you could just tell me your city and state
15 of residence, please?

16 A. Well, my, in the United States I claim the company as my
17 residence, Portland Oregon.

18 Q. Okay, Portland, Oregon. And what is your occupation?

19 A. Able Seaman.

20 Q. And you work for?

21 A. Majestic America.

22 Q. And how long have you worked for Majestic America?

23 A. A year and five months.

24 MR. TURRELL: Okay, Ben we're going to adjourn this
25 briefly. We're going to go to the bridge and I'm going to ask you

1 to give us a statement what you saw and heard at the time of the
2 accident. And we'll come back down here and restart the
3 interview. Is that okay?

4 MR. FRENCH: Okay.

5 MR. TURRELL: Thank you.

6 (Off the record.)

7 (On the record.)

8 BY MR. TURRELL: Okay, we're resuming our interview with
9 Ben AB at the time of the accident.

10 Q. Ben, if you'd just go ahead and we're recording here.
11 You understand that it's being recorded?

12 A. Yes, I understand.

13 Q. And we have all the same individuals here.

14 Okay, can you just kindly give us a statement? Start if
15 you would, the day before, like you went to bed and then you got
16 up and just kind of start there.

17 A. Okay. The day before, I was told that I could leave at
18 3:00 in the afternoon. Normally I work from 6:00 to 6:00, but the
19 captain told me to lay low at 3:00. So I went down to my room,
20 went to bed because I was supposed to come up for the 12:00 to
21 4:00 watch because Marino was coming on watch and they thought it
22 might be better to have three people up here. The Able Seaman
23 that was on at the time had not been with the company for years,
24 several years, and they thought it best that I put myself up there
25 as well.

1 Q. So, you went to bed and you woke up at what time?

2 A. I woke up at around 11:00, 11:15. I got out of bed, put
3 my clothes on, got my coffee, proceeded to the bridge. I talked
4 to, I believe it was Eric that was on the helm before me. I
5 relieved him from the helm. The off going mate and the ongoing
6 mate informed of what was going on. So I relieved the wheel and I
7 took the course.

8 Q. So taking through from midnight when you took the watch,
9 what you were doing, was it in autopilot? What were you up to and
10 where were you?

11 A. Autopilot starting 03. We were about an hour away from
12 Falts Point Light (phonetic). Whenever we pass through Falts
13 Point Lights, there is no course changes. It's pretty much
14 straight on all the way through there.

15 We made our security call. I don't remember the
16 security call, which one it was. Well, I noted the big course
17 change that was coming up. It was a greater than 70 degree course
18 change. And then it was (inaudible) change to (inaudible) and
19 then change to 90 shortly afterward. And it was to take us between
20 Rocky Island and (inaudible.)

21 Q. So what course were you on before you made the course
22 change?

23 A. I would have to check the chart. I don't remember.

24 Q. Was it (inaudible) course?

25 A. (Inaudible).

1 Q. Was it because you were trying to come up to a 270
2 course change?

3 A. Right 270.

4 Q. And what time was this, roughly?

5 A. I noted it around 20 after 1:00, about 25 minutes after
6 1:00 I started into the course. We were on autopilot, 20 degrees,
7 which means that the (inaudible) going to change then at 20
8 degrees course per minute. So, naturally, we have to give it
9 (inaudible) time.

10 Q. Okay. Then what happened?

11 A. A couple of minutes into the turn, the mate, well, I
12 told the mate I didn't think we were going to make the turn.

13 Q. And (inaudible)?

14 A. When you're watching, whenever you look up out the
15 window and you see something that is off your starboard area and
16 port bow and instead of a 45 degree angle, and it gets a certain
17 amount of distance and it doesn't start moving (inaudible), then
18 you're not going to make it.

19 Q. A visual bearing?

20 A. A visual bearing, yes.

21 BY MR. CORBIJN:

22 Q. This is Nico Corbijn. So a visual bearing?

23 A. Of the light.

24 Q. Which light?.

25 A. Rock Island light.

1 BY MR. TURRELL:

2 Q. Okay, so you're on autopilot at 20 degrees per minute to
3 the right?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. To the right.

6 A. Uh-huh.

7 Q. And started the turn around 1:25?

8 A. Uh-huh.

9 Q. And as you made the turn, you were observing the Rocky
10 Point light? Rock Island light, excuse me.

11 A. Well, I was looking up at flashing lights because the
12 mate could see right out the window, so he keeps an eye on things.

13 So I was watching the lights, I was watching Nobeltec Radar,
14 swing meter, trying to pay attention to make sure that we have
15 enough space to do it.

16 Q. Okay. So, you communicated to the mate you didn't
17 think you were going to make it.

18 A. Yes. (Inaudible).

19 Q. And what did you do?

20 A. Well, the mate was saying I think that he doesn't know
21 the (inaudible) very well, so I brought it around, it met the
22 course, and then I came left.

23 Q. You came at the course?

24 A. Yes, you have to, whenever you're dialing in the course
25 here, if you don't watch it, it will shake the ship up and it will

1 take off (inaudible). So I brought it around and then came left.

2 It didn't hold any courses. It just --

3 Q. What did the ship do then?

4 A. It started to come left.

5 Q. And before you put in 20 degrees to the right, how much
6 (inaudible) did you do?

7 A. (Inaudible).

8 Q. And then from there, what happened next?

9 A. We came, we started coming 20 degrees to the left. He
10 said hold the course.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. So we met it. I'm not sure what course we were on at
13 that point. He was looking for the light.

14 Q. What was the visibility like?

15 A. It was pretty clear that night.

16 Q. So, you were using the autopilot?

17 A. Right.

18 Q. No manual controls. Is that correct?

19 A. That's correct.

20 Q. And what was (inaudible) at?

21 A. We were running just below, I think we were running
22 about 800, we were making about 12 knots.

23 Q. Now 800 is a tack for?

24 A. 800 turns --

25 Q. Turns on --

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. It's not a RPM?

3 A. No. It's --

4 Q. (Inaudible).

5 A. Uh-huh.

6 Q. At 12 knots?

7 A. Right, uh-huh.

8 Q. Did you, at any point, slow down?

9 A. No, I wasn't aware of that.

10 Q. So, is this normally where you would stand?

11 A. Right here.

12 Q. Would you stand where you would normally? And the

13 autopilot is right here?

14 A. The autopilot is right here.

15 Q. Okay, so I guess to at that point now, you're straying

16 there, you've put in 20 degrees left or 20 degrees for left man --

17 A. Right. And when you want to meet the course, you put in

18 a whole course.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. I did.

21 Q. And then what?

22 A. She was looking to the right, (inaudible) right

23 starboard bow.

24 Q. And this was the Rock Island light?

25 A. Yes.

- 1 Q. About 45 degrees off the starboard bow?
- 2 A. Yes, right about that.
- 3 Q. Roughly?
- 4 A. Yes, roughly.
- 5 Q. Okay.
- 6 A. Yes, I don't even know if it was -- no, I can't answer
- 7 that honestly. I have to strike that statement, I'm sorry.
- 8 Q. Okay.
- 9 A. Yes, so he observed the light and --
- 10 Q. Where did you observe the light? When did you see the
- 11 light?
- 12 A. I was trying to get a radar (inaudible). And he ordered
- 13 a hard left now.
- 14 Q. (Inaudible)?
- 15 A. He ordered hard left now, called the captain, I swung
- 16 the bow and went for the phone, and I was ready to take it into
- 17 manual (inaudible). And at that point is whenever we struck.
- 18 Q. And so you were in the process of calling the captain
- 19 and going left when you struck Rocky Island?
- 20 A. Yes, sir. It pretty much happened at the same time.
- 21 Q. And then what did you do?
- 22 A. Well, I felt a rumbling, you know, I felt it kind of
- 23 jerk on the starboard side.
- 24 Q. What did you do then?
- 25 A. I fell back to about here, about that point. The captain

1 ran up to the bridge.

2 Q. What happened then?

3 A. He yelled something about stop this and get my radio.

4 At that point, the OS came up and we went down to the (inaudible).

5 Q. You went down to (inaudible).

6 A. (Inaudible).

7 Q. This was about 1:30?

8 A. Right about then, uh-huh.

9 Q. We will have some questions (inaudible). Did you ever
10 come back to the bridge?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Could you tell us what the radar was set at? Do you
13 remember what the radar was set at?

14 A. I don't remember.

15 Q. Who was operating the radar you or --

16 A. Marino.

17 Q. (Inaudible).

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And the ECDIS and the Nobeltec?

20 A. Yes, those are set by the officers (inaudible).

21 Q. Did he ever (inaudible)?

22 A. No.

23 Q. And did you ever observe any instructions on the radar
24 or were you keeping track yourself?

25 A. Yes. I was. He had it set at a different setting than

1 what I was accustomed to and it was set for (inaudible) situation.

2 Q. When you say a different setting, was it a heads up or -

3 -

4 A. Well, normally, we like to keep it, well, we're keeping
5 it at, we keep the BRM at a quarter mile.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. So where we can, a quarter mile the (inaudible) then we
8 can see exactly what's coming. And I think he had it set for
9 something (inaudible) but you'll have to ask him about it. I
10 haven't been to radar school yet.

11 Q. Okay. And any other control (inaudible)?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Were you strictly using the autopilot --

14 A. Right. We --

15 Q. -- the whole time you were up here?

16 A. We don't change controls, unless we're ordered to. And
17 we're not allowed, we're not in charge of it. We're just
18 overseeing the (inaudible).

19 Q. So, previous experience with the same deck officer, you
20 saying (inaudible) in the day time. Have you sat watch with him
21 before?

22 A. No.

23 MR. TURRELL: Any questions about the controls while
24 we're up here? Liam? Barry?

25 MR. STRAUCH: Yes.

1 BY MR. STRAUCH:

2 Q. Barry Strauch. Where's the radar scope? You said he
3 had set the radar a different way?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Where is the radar?

6 A. Over there.

7 Q. What difference did it make in terms of what you saw
8 with his settings, what was the difference?

9 A. He had it set to where you could see, I think, within a
10 five mile area. So, he had it set to where you would see things
11 that are far out and then he had the BRM set to the point where it
12 was, for me, it would have been a little more difficult to
13 identify targets, (inaudible) targets return (inaudible).

14 Q. And what is BRM?

15 A. The two circles where you're vessel is at and a quarter
16 mile (inaudible).

17 MR. STRAUCH: Thank you.

18 BY MR. LARUE:

19 Q. Liam Larue. What do you normally see?

20 A. (Inaudible) quarter and a half.

21 Q. So what is the range for the radar, are you saying that
22 it is five miles?

23 A. Well then again, I haven't been to radar school.

24 Q. Okay.

25 MR. TURRELL: Chris?

1 BY MR. JULIUS:

2 Q. Would you just walk us through again in your own area
3 the time when you were approaching the light and if you could just
4 kind of walk us through and what he saw as you were approaching
5 the light and transpired on the bridge, what the conversations
6 were. Just kind of reiterate some of the stuff you've already
7 done, but go in to as much detail as you can. Just go back
8 through it with as much detail as you can as you approach the area
9 where the accident occurred. You were aware that something was
10 going wrong and you discussed it with (inaudible).

11 A. Well, I remember, at some point --

12 Q. In as much detail as you can.

13 A. I remember saying that the B course change (inaudible).
14 And we observed it. We talked about it, you know, the 70
15 degrees, go back to the paper charts (inaudible) it looks like
16 it's 90 degrees. Then we looked at the electronic chart and saw
17 it went from 270 to 290. And then as we were coming up on it
18 (inaudible) there's really not much to tell.

19 I observed the Rock Island line off the starboard a
20 couple of times. You know, I tried to keep my eye on it as much
21 as possible and to also keep an eye on what was going on with the
22 ship. And at that point, it's (inaudible). Not much to tell
23 there.

24 And I didn't know how (inaudible).

25 Q. How long (inaudible) were you and the mate aware of a

1 potential problem (inaudible)?

2 A. The course change?

3 Q. Yes.

4 A. Oh, just a couple of minutes.

5 MR. TURRELL: Liam.

6 BY MR. LARUE:

7 Q. Liam Larue again. Now, as you're coming up to this
8 course change, and so you're keeping an eye on the light, did the
9 intended track would that have put the light on the port side or
10 the starboard?

11 A. Port.

12 Q. Okay. And then as you noticed that you weren't coming
13 around enough, that is when you (inaudible)?

14 A. At that point, I remember saying I don't think we're
15 going to make it.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And (inaudible).

18 BY LT. BRIERLEY OSTRANDER:

19 Q. Lieutenant Brierley Ostrander. Is there anything else
20 you could besides the light?

21 A. No. Just the light. At the very end, you know, you
22 could kind of make out some rocks as we rumbled by.

23 MR. TURRELL: Tim?

24 BY MR. FARLEY:

25 Q. Tim Farley. Now, you came on watch at midnight?

1 A. Yes, 11:45 we came up (inaudible) and we have two or
2 three minutes (inaudible).

3 Q. You mentioned this was the first time with this
4 particular officer?

5 A. That is correct.

6 Q. Did you discern any confidence or would you describe it
7 as (inaudible)?

8 A. He seemed like he was confident. He just came out of
9 the academy (inaudible) to the bridge.

10 Q. Did he describe what he expected out of you with the
11 watch? With the reductions and you know, I expect you to keep an
12 eye on certain, anything like that?

13 A. He did say keep on the track line.

14 MR. TURRELL: Let's go over some of the details, kind of
15 (inaudible) questions downstairs.

16 BY MR. FARLEY:

17 Q. Well, I was going to ask about visibility. So, this is
18 where you would stand?

19 A. This is where we stand, uh-huh.

20 Q. Okay. And are there any obstructions that would cause a
21 problem here?

22 A. When we have a big mast.

23 Q. Big mast. Does that, in any way, have any bearing on
24 this?

25 A. No.

1 MR. TURRELL: Any more questions while we're up here?

2 We're going to stop the recording right now. We're
3 going to go downstairs and have some more detailed questions.

4 MR. FRENCH: Okay.

5 MR. TURRELL: Thanks.

6 MR. FRENCH: You're welcome.

7

8 MR. TURRELL: Okay, it's Morgan Turrell again. It's now
9 noon. We're continuing our conversation with Ben French.

10 BY MR. TURRELL:

11 Q. And we're going to start out Ben, if you would, please
12 describe the first would be the itinerary, where you were on the
13 voyage, what the voyage --

14 A. Okay. We were going to Glacier Bay to meet the Ranger.
15 I believe were scheduled to pick up the Ranger at 0600 at the
16 Glacier Bay Lodge.

17 Q. And where were you coming from?

18 A. We were coming from up, way up here.

19 Q. What was the last port of call?

20 A. What was the last port of call? Skagway.

21 Q. Okay. And normally how long does that normally take the
22 ship to go from Skagway to Glacier Bay?

23 A. Well, this was our first seven day, so I don't know.

24 Q. Okay. So if you would describe on the chart please,
25 we're down looking at this particular area where, near Rocky

1 Island and this reef. Would you just describe here, what you told
2 us up on the bridge, what occurred, to the best of your knowledge.

3 A. Okay.

4 Q. Using the chart as a reference.

5 A. Yes, I can use the chart as a reference, but I have to
6 point out that I'm an Able Seaman --

7 Q. Sure.

8 A. -- on the watch. And as being an Able Seaman, it makes
9 me not be an expert with the charts. I'm on watch.

10 Q. Well this is Rocky Island, right. I'm sorry, if I
11 remember correctly, around 1:25 you said that you started to turn.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. So you were in this area here somewhere, roughly?

14 A. Yes, we were roughly in this area right here.

15 Q. Okay, so roughly around where this 1186 is. It seems
16 like someone is going to fix your (inaudible).

17 So you were probably somewhere in this general vicinity
18 off of Point Couberden?

19 A. Uh-huh.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How do you spell that?

21 MR. TURRELL: C-o-u-b-e-r-d-e-n.

22 MR. FRENCH: Uh-huh.

23 BY MR. TURRELL:

24 Q. Okay, so take us through now, we had a conversation
25 about a turn coming up.

1 A. Yes, we noted that there was a turn coming up, taking us
2 inside the Rocky Island. It was also on the Nobeltec.

3 Q. So you are referring to this line that goes between
4 Rocky Island and the mainland?

5 A. Yes. And on the Nobeltec, there was a course that ran
6 through here along the shore. And there was another course that
7 ran through here and that came at 270 degrees and then it came to
8 290. So we were going to take the 270 290.

9 Q. Now, with that course, you said, was in a Nobeltec?

10 A. Yes.

11 MR. WILHELM: I would represent that I don't think that
12 you know, that he would know.

13 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

14 MR. WILHELM: He's not an expert on that.

15 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

16 MR. FRENCH: I just, I take orders.

17 MR. TURRELL: I understand.

18 BY MR. TURRELL:

19 Q. So, I guess the point here is that you weren't
20 attempting to make this turn here, the 230, 290 or attempting to
21 make the 270, 290?

22 A. Coming around the outside of the island? No.

23 Q. Oh, you were going --

24 A. We were going to the inside.

25 Q. Okay. And then once the deck officer realized that you

1 were -- I'm trying to get an idea of where this light was when you
2 realized you needed some light.

3 A. It was off the starboard bow. So, it was about 45
4 degrees off the starboard bow. So we must have been, well, I
5 can't say for sure. You'll probably be able to get a, you'll get
6 a good idea if you check the, I guess there's a tracker or
7 something. You'll be able to obtain the information from that.
8 So, we must have been somewhere in this vicinity right here.

9 Q. Okay. So then you saw a light on the starboard bow?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Did you see any light on the port bow?

12 A. No.

13 Q. So, I'm trying to understand if there was -- can you see
14 this light from where you were?

15 A. No.

16 Q. You were on this course here. You were on the 270?

17 A. Well, we wanted to make that course, but we weren't on
18 it yet.

19 Q. The initial course change was your role play doing the
20 southerly course here --

21 A. No, it's going to take you right through here.

22 Q. Okay. All right. So, I see what you're talking. I've
23 got you. And the deck officer, there was no change in engine
24 orders?

25 A. No.

1 MR. TURRELL: Barry, any questions?

2 MR. STRAUCH: Yes, I've got a couple of questions.

3 MR. TURRELL: You want to switch places?

4 MR. STRAUCH: All right, yes.

5 BY MR. STRAUCH:

6 Q. Did you go up, you and the third mate, did you take over
7 the watch at the same time?

8 A. He came up on, he was up before I was.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. I was on a standing order to be there 15 minutes prior.
11 I came up about 15 minutes prior. It was maybe 10 or 15 minutes
12 prior, how knows, but about 15 minutes prior, and he had already
13 gone through the watch exchange with the (inaudible) mate.

14 Q. Okay. Did you go through a similar exchange?

15 A. (Inaudible.)

16 Q. Okay and what was the information exchanged between you
17 and the person you were relieving?

18 A. (Inaudible), the course we were on, the course we were
19 on, the course we were steering magnetic and gyro, how many turns
20 we were making. That we were a little bit ahead of schedule.
21 That was good because we wanted time to (inaudible) for whale
22 watching.

23 Q. Okay. Did you exchange any information with the third
24 mate when you came on watch?

25 A. Third mate? No. No, not too much information there.

1 After he finishes his exchange with the second mate, that was off
2 going. He was in the watch and he said to keep it on the track
3 line. We made a little bit of small talk. We talked about
4 celestial (inaudible).

5 Q. Okay. Were you present when he relieved his watch
6 officer?

7 A. No, sir.

8 Q. Now you said this was the first seven day cruise --

9 A. First seven day cruise.

10 Q. -- of the season. Had you been on this route before
11 this year, 2007?

12 A. Yes, I was as an OS last year.

13 Q. Okay. So you've done it many times before?

14 A. Well, as an OS. You know, an OS is a little bit
15 different than a watch standing as an AB.

16 Q. In what way?

17 A. Watch standing AB also sometimes steers and is up here
18 on the bridge constantly. Whereas as an OS up here, you also have
19 to do security rounds which takes you out of the bridge, that sort
20 of thing, at least with this company.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. So, I had been in the area before, but not as an AB.

23 Q. Okay. What was the time that elapsed between the time
24 you told the third mate you didn't think we were going to make it
25 and the time you struck rock?

1 A. I can only speculate briefly. Maybe three or four
2 minutes.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I didn't hear the question.

4 MR. FRENCH: How much time elapsed between the time he
5 told the third mate he didn't think they would make it and the
6 time they actually hit.

7 BY MR. STRAUCH:

8 Q. When you said you didn't think he was going to make it,
9 what did you expect him to do?

10 A. Order a course change.

11 Q. And was the course change that he ordered, was that what
12 you expected also?

13 A. Well, yes. At that point, I'm just paying attention to
14 orders. So whatever course change he gives me is what I'm going
15 to do. (Inaudible.) That's what you do.

16 MR. TURRELL: That's it. Liam?

17 MR. LARUE: Liam Larue, NTSB.

18 BY MR. LARUE:

19 Q. You mentioned that you chose the 270 course track. Was
20 there another helpful track that was in the Nobeltec?

21 A. There was.

22 Q. And what was that?

23 A. I don't know, you'd have to look at the whole thing.

24 Q. Could you describe for us a little bit how the, you
25 know, what happened after you hit the rock, what was the next step

1 by you, by the mate, everything you saw, in as much detail as you
2 could provide?

3 A. Right after we hit the rock?

4 Q. Just from that point forward.

5 A. Well, I believe that we were shoaling. Yes, we struck
6 the shoaling. The captain came to the bridge right away, right
7 between the incident and the captain arrived at the bridge and the
8 striking the shoaling, it seems like he was there instantaneously.

9 So he ran to the bridge. He said something about stop.

10 And then OS Owen appeared on the bridge. He yelled to him, let's
11 go get my radio, now. And we ran down to his office, OS Owen
12 found his radio, took it up to him. I told the OS, I said, I'm
13 going to respond to my station. And then he said, got it. And he
14 was heading back up to the bridge and I went and responded to my
15 station.

16 Q. What is your station?

17 A. I'm a medical responder.

18 Q. So where does that take you?

19 A. It takes me down to third deck for my gear and then down
20 to the main deck to the pre-muster area.

21 Q. You weren't up on the bridge at all for anything that
22 transpired after that?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Okay. Do you remember any alarms being sounded? Did
25 the captain make any announcements? Could you tell us about that?

1 A. After?

2 Q. After --

3 A. Well, constantly. He was constantly on the overhead
4 updating passengers as to what was going on, where they needed to
5 go, where they needed to be.

6 And he had kind like a (inaudible). You can hear him.

7 Q. How quickly after you left the bridge and after you had
8 struck the shoaling, how could, when was the first announcement,
9 do you remember? And what was it?

10 A. Almost instantaneous. Yes, he was very fast, his
11 response.

12 Q. Do you remember what he said?

13 A. No, I don't remember, word for word.

14 Q. Okay. Did he (inaudible)?

15 A. Yes, he said that we had run aground.

16 Q. And what was the next step with passengers?

17 A. The passengers were ordered to muster.

18 Q. Is there a general alarm for the ship?

19 A. There is a general alarm.

20 Q. What's the general alarm?

21 A. It's (inaudible) standard (inaudible) alarm.

22 Q. Was that sounded?

23 A. No. They were awake.

24 Q. What sort of training do you all do onboard for any type
25 of emergency?

1 A. Two times a week, we -- well, with passengers or without
2 the passengers?

3 Q. Both.

4 A. Okay. Prior to every cruise we run through a scenario,
5 an abandon ship scenario where all the passengers take their
6 personal floatation devices out. They put them on, they gather on
7 the companion ways. The officers and the ABs come through the
8 companion ways and inspect each personal floatation device and
9 make sure that is the proper fit. If it's not, then whether we
10 need to get a child collar, or we do something about it. And then
11 from there, we talk to a few of them at a time as we're making our
12 way down the companion way, to ensure that they know exactly where
13 there muster station is. And then we ask them if they have any
14 questions. Then, if we don't have any questions, then they stand
15 by until the captain dismisses them from the drill.

16 So from that point, we do another drill that just
17 involves the crew, where we discharge fire hoses. We fill the
18 hoses, we charge them. We inspect the hoses to make sure that
19 they're holding the charge and not slipping from the fittings.
20 And then we discharge the hoses to ensure that there is good
21 pressure and that they're running clear and strong and there is no
22 evidence of corrosion in the pipes. After that, then we get
23 underway. We never leave the dock until it's done.

24 Q. So you did this, these drills before you got underway
25 for this trip?

1

2 A. Yes, we did.

3 Q. And you said twice weekly for other drills?

4 A. Well, that's, the passenger drills, the fire drill, and
5 then there's another pre-drill through the week that we do,
6 depending on which, you know, it's either abandon ship prior or
7 man overboard or flooding.

8 Q. Okay. Do you remember the last drill you conducted?

9 A. It was earlier in the week, we actually did a security.

10 Q. I'm searching back here a little bit. As you were
11 transiting, you mentioned you were on autopilot?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay. Is that normal procedure for when you're
14 operating in this area?

15 A. Standard, yes.

16 Q. Standard. And you remain on autopilot to do the turn.
17 Is that also normal?

18 A. That's normal. The autopilot is (inaudible). It can
19 hold a course better than I can.

20 MR. LARUE: All right. That's all I've got for right
21 now. Thank you.

22 BY MR. TURRELL:

23 Q. I want to go back and ask some difficult questions here
24 about the mate and what you observed.

25 So you began the first turn. And when the mate observed

1 that he wasn't going to make the turn, when it became apparent
2 that he wasn't going to make the turn, it was like you said, three
3 or four minutes, before you struck?

4 A. Something like that, yes.

5 Q. Did he make any comments, did he make any exclamation?

6 A. As in what type?

7 Q. Well, how did he appraise the situation?

8 A. Oh, he -- how did he appraise the situation?

9 Q. Yes.

10 A. I don't know how to answer that.

11 Q. Did he make any comments?

12 A. If you're asking if he swore or if he --

13 Q. No, I don't care about that.

14 A. -- or something of that nature.

15 Q. No. I just want to know how you, did you have any sense
16 that he realized what was about to happen?

17 A. He was calm through the thing. He was pretty calm. At
18 least to me he was calm. (Inaudible).

19 Q. So he did then ask to change course to port?

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. And when he made that order, did he tell you, I think,
22 you said, you said hard left, is that, did he give you that
23 command to go full left?

24 A. (Inaudible.)

25 Q. Did he ask you, at that point, to verify the ship was

1 actually doing that?

2 A. No.

3 Q. What was he up to at that point? Was he (inaudible) of
4 the chart, was he --

5 A. Checking the chart and checking the electronic chart as
6 well.

7 Q. What was the normal practice for making paper fixes, in
8 your experience?

9 A. Sort of the, well, we don't make paper fixes, that's
10 ABs.

11 Q. The deck officers? Would it be normally that they're
12 (inaudible)?

13 A. Well, I seem them, it depends on the deck officer. I
14 see them make the paper charts and take them (inaudible).

15 Q. Did you observe him making a fix that evening?

16 A. He made fixes.

17 Q. Did he?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. Do you recall taking a drug test after the
20 accident?

21 A. I did.

22 Q. And do you recall when you did that?

23 A. It wasn't very long after that. It was, I can only
24 speculate, but it must have been about two hours after that.

25 Q. (Inaudible) answer the question.

1 A. Debby Hines (phonetic) and the bar manager who also is a
2 purser, Heather, I think is her name, who also did an alcohol
3 breathalyzer test shortly after the accident.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And that was administered by the security (inaudible.)

6 Q. Who, when you came onboard the vessel, when did you
7 first start working onboard the ship this season? How long have
8 you been working on the boat recently?

9 A. How long have I been working on --

10 Q. Recently, when you came onboard recently?

11 A. Oh, when I came on for the last river trip (inaudible)
12 and then it --

13 Q. How many days?

14 A. Oh, 19 days or so, probably around that.

15 Q. When you came onboard, did they conduct a vessel
16 familiarization?

17 A. A vessel familiarization?

18 Q. Yes, like did some officer take you around and show you
19 your station, show you your duties and --

20 A. My station, as far as the station business?

21 Q. And any other duties?

22 A. Oh, (inaudible) orders and we do it. So, as far as my
23 station goes, it doesn't change very often.

24 Q. When you started with the company, did they do any sort
25 of training familiarization?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Can you take us through that?

3 A. Okay. We do a safety walk through.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And that's when we start from the bottom of the boat to
6 the top of the boat, describing all of the (inaudible) stickers,
7 the fire stations, the gear we have onboard, the watertight doors,
8 the security issues, how to operate watertight doors manually, and
9 do the hydraulics. We talk about (inaudible) doors, the
10 importance of security of the boat whenever we're crossing the
11 (inaudible). What are the station bills that are posted?

12 Q. Can you roughly tell me how long that took? Just a day,
13 a half a day, a few hours?

14 A. No, it takes, the orientation runs about 72 hours. It
15 takes about three days to get through orientation.

16 Q. Is part of that any videos or any type of paper
17 training?

18 A. We do DSG, as members of the deck we're required to
19 participate in safety training.

20 Q. What certificates or documents do you hold, a first
21 mariners document or --

22 A. I do. I have a QPW, Able Seaman Special, I have a
23 purser's license, certificate of registry, and I have a 100 ton
24 master's certificate.

25 Q. So you were operating under your AB Specialty?

1 A. Yes.

2 MR. TURRELL: Tim, any questions?

3 MR. FARLEY: No.

4 MR. TURRELL: Chris?

5 BY MR. JULIUS:

6 Q. How much experience do you have using your master's
7 certificate?

8 A. None.

9 MR. TURRELL: Barry?

10 MR. STRAUCH: No.

11 MR. TURRELL: (Inaudible.)

12 BY LT. BRIERLEY OSTRANDER:

13 Q. Just a couple of follow ups. Drive mode three. Can you
14 tell me more about that?

15 A. We were in a drive mode three. It enables the boat, the
16 pilots (inaudible) to steer simultaneously as you are on autopilot
17 or you can, if you go into hand (inaudible) control each one
18 through each hand, if you want to spin one 360 degrees, point the
19 other one in a direction to perform a maneuver or anything
20 (inaudible), he's the pilot, (inaudible). That's a drive mode
21 three.

22 Q. How often do you use that mode as opposed to other
23 options?

24 A. All the time. The drive mode three is a standing order.

25 Q. Standard, okay. In your conversation with the guy you

1 were relieving, he told you how many turns you were making, does
2 that mean how many turns coming up before Bartlett Cove?

3 A. No. (Inaudible).

4 Q. Oh. Were you party to the conversation of why you went
5 to this inside course and not around the rocks? Why did they
6 choose this course?

7 A. Well, it's what was (inaudible). It was the track. It
8 was what I was ordered to do, basically.

9 Q. Oh, are the two tracks on this chart the same as the two
10 tracks on Nobeltec?

11 A. We'd have to look at the Nobeltec. I'd say (inaudible)
12 but I'd have to look at the Nobeltec. I can't remember now. I'm
13 sorry.

14 Q. When you were OS last year, did you have anything to do
15 with your (inaudible) on the helm?

16 A. Well, we do assessments for our (inaudible) part of our
17 navigational watch, you know, the training.

18 Q. Had you ever been on the helm through this area before?

19 A. Right in this area, no, I don't believe so. I think I
20 might have steered in the upper area where it's long and straight.
21 And maybe an icing straight on the some of the straight
22 stretches. I'd have to pull records from last year to know
23 exactly when I was on it.

24 LT. BRIERLEY OSTRANDER: That's all I've got right now.

25 MR. TURRELL: Tim.

1 BY MR. FARLEY:

2 Q. Tim Farley. Do you know who made the track lines on
3 this chart?

4 A. No, sir.

5 Q. Are you aware, or do you have any pre-voyage planning
6 meeting with the mate when you come on watch, what are you going
7 to do, where are you going to go or how are you going to affect
8 any course change?

9 A. No, it's pretty much a standing order to follow orders.
10 That's what an OS does. That's what we do.

11 Q. What would you do if you saw a hazardous situation?

12 A. The safest thing I could do would be to follow the
13 orders of the officers and try to do a navigational watch. I'm
14 not qualified to --

15 Q. And if you saw a problem, what would you do then?

16 A. Report it.

17 Q. Report it. Do you feel, on this particular watch, that
18 you could talk to the mate openly?

19 A. It was, yes, his demeanor was very kind. He's a very,
20 very nice man.

21 Q. When, following the events that you proceeded to your
22 station bill, was that your personal decision or were you told to
23 do that?

24 A. We were in the midst of an emergency. As I was on my
25 way, that's when I started hearing the announcement. You know,

1 whenever you hear the announcement, and I heard it through muster,
2 I was on my way. So, what I was to do was to go and respond to my
3 station bill.

4 Q. But there was no general, no general alarm was sounded?

5 A. Not above deck. I don't know if they did it on one of
6 the lower decks for the crew. So, you know, I was outside, making
7 my way down the vessel at that point. So, what was going on
8 inside, I don't know. (Inaudible.)

9 Q. And you mentioned that that you saw the third mate make
10 fixes?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Do you (inaudible) how the mate accomplished that
13 (inaudible)?

14 A. Well, he was, how was he fixing things?

15 Q. Yes. The piece of instrumentation that he used?

16 A. I'm not sure what piece of instrumentation he used. We
17 have quite a few pieces of information up there on the bridge to
18 ensure where we're at. And so, there's even a unit that sits back
19 there on the chart table (inaudible) see what our position is.

20 So I don't know which piece of equipment he used.

21 Q. So the mate, did the mate step outside of the
22 wheelhouse, with one of the gyro repeaters?

23 A. I don't recall.

24 MR. FARLEY: Thanks, that's it.

25 BY MR. TURRELL:

1 Q. I have a few other questions. Did you observe this
2 particular deck officer using the radar? Where was he standing on
3 the bridge?

4 A. Where was he standing on the bridge?

5 Q. Well, walking around, stand by the radar, how did he
6 conduct himself?

7 A. He conducted himself very professionally. He was at the
8 radar for a little while until he had it set up the way he wanted
9 it set up to observe. And he sat behind my right shoulder by the
10 master's chair. That way, he could get back and forth to the
11 chart table and cross check the information.

12 Q. So, he observes a deck officer looking at the electronic
13 charts, the radar, and the paper charts, at various times?

14 A. Yes. (Inaudible.)

15 Q. Was he also checking on whether or not you were
16 performing your tasks correctly, detecting the course in the
17 (inaudible)?

18 A. I don't know, since he was behind on my right.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And I couldn't observe while he was there. You know,
21 occasionally, I would glance over whenever I would hear movement
22 or we were talking and I heard his head turn and start moving back
23 toward the chart table.

24 Q. Do you recall if there was any other cap in the area?

25 A. I do remember seeing two what we assumed to be fishing

1 vessels. They were pretty far out there, though, they were way
2 out by the shore (inaudible).

3 Q. Were there any radio communications during the two
4 hours, hour and a half of watch, do you recall any BHF
5 communications?

6 A. Yes, I talked to the Spirit of the Endeavor on the radio
7 on the channel, I believe it was 12. I talked to them because I
8 was pointing to several people from Bruce West and I wanted to ask
9 where the best sightings were (inaudible) in Glacier Bay where we
10 were just returning from Glacier Bay. So we communicated that.
11 And it talks about the activity of the whales as well. And which
12 glacier they thought would be best one time (inaudible). Just
13 sharing information about the natural events and what we can do
14 and that sort of thing.

15 Q. Were you aware of any equipment problems or failures or
16 anything not functioning correctly, to your knowledge?

17 A. Not that was reported to me.

18 Q. And was the deck officer giving you commands different
19 from other deck officers you've dealt with before? Is he similar
20 in the nature of orders telling you to come right or left? Did he
21 communicate with you in a similar way of (inaudible), in your
22 experience?

23 A. Well, every deck officer is a little bit different in
24 their personalities. But orders are the same. Orders are orders.
25 You know, when you go through regs on part of an ad watching, you

1 learn how commands (inaudible) and you respond to them.

2 Q. Are you aware of the safety management system of the
3 company?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Can you describe that system in your own words, what it
6 means to you?

7 A. Of the safety management system?

8 Q. This is generally half the instructions or checklists or
9 what type of information is communicated to you from that system?

10 A. As far as --

11 Q. What your daily caps may be or any weekly drills or how
12 the system functions?

13 A. As far as the safety management system --

14 Q. For example, do you know who the designated person is to
15 (inaudible)?

16 A. Procedure management?

17 Q. Yes.

18 A. (Inaudible).

19 Q. And do you recall ever going through an audit, safety
20 audit?

21 A. For myself or the company?

22 Q. The company.

23 A. No, that information is not really brought down to me.

24 Q. And whoever asks you questions, come up to you and said,
25 I'm a safety auditor for the company and ask you some questions.

1 A. Well, we're observed all the time by Coast Guard, by
2 company officials, whenever they're drilling. And there's been a
3 myriad of people who, during drills, have said, well, you know,
4 I'm so and so and I'm going to observe this.

5 Q. Okay. So how often do the company officials come
6 onboard?

7 A. Company officials, I see them onboard every week.

8 Q. Do they ever ride the ship?

9 A. Sometimes.

10 Q. Do they ever ride the ship at night?

11 A. Sometimes.

12 Q. Have you ever observed them between midnight and 4:00 in
13 the morning?

14 A. No, I haven't been on the midnight to 4:00 in the
15 morning watch in quite a while. I think I've (inaudible) down the
16 river (inaudible) during the day.

17 MR. TURRELL: Any other questions? Chris?

18 MR. JULIUS: I have a couple.

19 BY MR. JULIUS:

20 Q. Did you give us your (inaudible) hours sleep history,
21 when you were awake, when you went to sleep, going back about 72
22 or longer?

23 A. Yes, prior to that was whenever we were in the Skagway
24 Port.

25 Q. What day was that?

1 A. The day before the accident. The day before yesterday.

2 So we were in Skagway. I was up at 6:00. I worked, because we
3 were in Port. I don't remember exactly what time the first line
4 was over, but as soon as I got onboard in making lines ready.

5 We offloaded the passengers, went through the day,
6 checked on the OS's what they were doing their thing, watch lines,
7 set up one of the other (inaudible) so he could try to patch down
8 and get on the patch orders in developing surface rust, things of
9 that nature. And then at 1500, I went up to talk to the captain
10 in reference to an event that happened prior to that a 2692. It
11 was involving a passenger that we had to air-evac off. So I went
12 up and I talked to him about that briefly and then at 1500,
13 (inaudible). So he asked me if I could come back up (inaudible)
14 was watching.

15 Q. And the day before that?

16 A. The day before that was turn day. So, turn day is you
17 work a 12 hour day. You know, we offload the garbage. Well,
18 first of all, we offload the passengers and make sure that they
19 all take the (inaudible). And then we have to offload the
20 garbage, wash the vessel down and all vessel stuff. What we have
21 to do is to get the vessel ready for the next voyage. All of the
22 things that I'm involved in are external.

23 Q. What time did you get up that day?

24 A. I usually wake up about 0500 and I go to work at 0541,
25 take a shower, get some coffee.

1 Q. Do you typically go to bed at a normal time?

2 A. I do. I'm a pretty normal sleeper.

3 Q. What time do you go to bed?

4 A. What's that?

5 Q. What time do you usually go to bed?

6 A. Well, I usually go down below around 7:30, 8:00. And
7 then I read for a few minutes. And then I usually am very tired
8 and I go to sleep. And then I wake up around 5:00, take a shower
9 (inaudible). So that covers the few days before that.

10 Q. You feel like you had a regular night's sleep for the
11 nights before the accident?

12 A. I did. Yes, I was rested. Yes.

13 Q. And the day before you got up at 6:00.

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. And you were awake until?

16 A. Until about 3:30, 4:00. I was a little bit tired that
17 day, you know, because we had done turn day and that prior to
18 that, we had the air-evac operations, which is kind of traumatic.

19 Q. And then you went to sleep when that day, the day before
20 the accident?

21 A. The day before the accident?

22 Q. Yes. Well, you got up at 6:00 --

23 A. Right.

24 Q. -- the day before the accident. And you turned to --

25 A. I turned to, went down and read. I was probably asleep

1 by 3:30. It was pretty fast.

2 Q. And you slept until around 11:00, 11:30?

3 A. Yes, right about that. You know, with the (inaudible)
4 sometimes you wake up in the middle of your sleep because you have
5 to go to the bathroom or something. But if I remember
6 (inaudible).

7 Q. And then the day before the two days you described was
8 just another normal day where you're up around 5:00?

9 A. Right.

10 Q. And why don't you describe that day, because that sounds
11 like the day that you had an air-evac.

12 A. The air-evac day? That was Tracy Arm day, it was the
13 day before turn day. We were in Tracy Arm. I was asked to
14 respond to a medical condition in one of the rooms on the second
15 deck. (Inaudible) or anything of that nature for the sake of
16 confidentiality. So I went down and responded to the emergency.
17 The man had all the symptoms of an AMI, which is an acute
18 myocardial infarction. So, a heart attack. He was turning blue.
19 His arms (inaudible) pain on a scale one through ten was a six.
20 He had nitro pills all over him. He had told me that he had been
21 taking nitroglycerin tablets. He also told me that he had taken
22 some aspirin, the heaviness in his chest was increasing. His wife
23 was there. She was distraught. I kept monitoring blood pressures
24 every five minutes. He took another aspirin. His blood pressure
25 and vital signs began to stabilize. This continued for probably

1 another hour and a half, two hours.

2 And then the Coast Guard life flight wanted to talk to
3 the ensign responder to know what was going on. I had to go to
4 the bridge. The third mate relieved me to watch the patient. I
5 went to the bridge. The third mate radioed me right away that the
6 patient had lost consciousness. I went down and got the AED on
7 the patient and had to administer CPR.

8 Q. Was that the first time you had ever done that?

9 A. No, sir.

10 Q. The AED? And then what time was that, what time of day?

11 A. About 2:00.

12 Q. And then he was taken from the ship?

13 A. Pardon me?

14 Q. Was this person taken off the ship?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Was he alive?

17 A. He was alive when he left the ship.

18 Q. And did you subsequently find out that he died?

19 A. He passed away at 1923 (inaudible).

20 Q. Is that the first time that it's ever happened for you,
21 that kind of experience?

22 A. On the ship, or in general?

23 Q. In general?

24 A. No.

25 BY MR. TURRELL:

1 Q. What was your role in the rescue, the offloading? Could
2 you tell us what you did as a crew member in the getting
3 passengers off?

4 A. Well, my job is to respond to any injuries or any sort
5 of things that is reported by crew members, if somebody falls down
6 the stairs, for example, or something like that. You know, I'm
7 ordered to respond right away.

8 So there were no injuries that were reported at the
9 point that all of the passengers were in the muster area. They
10 were being kept calm through the licensed management at the
11 (inaudible) administering, if you will. At the time, I called and
12 asked the chief agent and asked if there was something that I
13 could assist with, since I was standing by as medical.

14 At that point, we decided that we should (inaudible) so
15 that they could get the life rafts into the water and (inaudible).

16 So I went up and assisted a bunch of the life rafts. We got the
17 life rafts, the rescue boats, (inaudible). So we got those in the
18 water, we got those underway. And then I went down and assisted
19 with the life slide on the port side of the vessel, and getting
20 the life rafts secured, and just doing as directed to keep the
21 situation (inaudible.)

22 Q. Okay. And it sounds like it went pretty well?

23 A. It went extremely well, I have to say, in my opinion.

24 MR. TURRELL: Yes, Barry?

25 BY MR. STRAUCH:

1 Q. Could you tell us about your training (inaudible)?

2 A. As far as the company training?

3 Q. How you learned to (inaudible).

4 A. Oh, I just had a lot of training in the past in medical
5 situations, you know, med tech, professional (inaudible).

6 Q. Was the training something you got in the military?

7 A. Some in the military, yes.

8 Q. And what kind of training did you get with the company?

9 A. With the company, the company sent us to a first
10 responder class.

11 Q. Where was the class?

12 A. The class was, there was a class onboard the vessel and
13 then there was another class at another facility off the vessel
14 (inaudible.).

15 Q. In the Juneau area?

16 A. No, it was in the Portland area.

17 BY MR. WEBB:

18 Q. Question, Paul Webb.

19 A. Sure.

20 Q. Was there any discussion when you were coming up to that
21 turn about Hanus Reef, about Rocky Island, you know, awareness of
22 which --

23 A. Not about Hanus Reef. About Rocky Island. We saw the
24 line. It talks about (inaudible). I wasn't looking for Hanus
25 Reef. I didn't see it.

1 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

2 Q. Was there anyone else on the bridge at the time of the
3 accident?

4 A. No, sir.

5 Q. It was just yourself and the third mate?

6 A. Yes.

7 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

8 Q. Was the crew permitted to interact socially?

9 A. Only if it's, only if they're conducting themselves in a
10 professional manner. You mean by social, anything like --

11 Q. Well, are you permitted to come to the bar?

12 A. No. Absolutely not. No, the crew, we perform our
13 duties and we perform them in a professional manner and that's it.

14 MR. TURRELL: I'll just, I'll conclude here just by
15 giving you the opportunity to tell the NTSB anything you'd like to
16 add or any comments, suggestions, or any general things you
17 observed that concern you or need to be communicated, you can do
18 so now, or contact me at a later time. But, you're on the record
19 and here's an opportunity to say anything you'd like.

20 MR. FRENCH: Well, for the record, I'd say that the
21 response to the accident was amazing and was very well conducted.
22 It was very professional. The level of calmness throughout the
23 passengers was very surprising. It was everybody did a fantastic
24 job and I'm most impressed. I consider myself to be able to
25 address situations performed in the past due to past obligations

1 with the government and in civilian (inaudible), I can say with
2 all heart that I think the captain and the crew did a fantastic
3 job in dealing with the situation and I applaud them. I'm
4 thankful for serving them.

5 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

6 Q. Well, I just I don't think we covered your background.
7 Could you just give us a brief kind of background of yourself
8 before you came to work here?

9 A. Sure.

10 Q. You went to high school, kind of generalize (inaudible).

11 A. Okay. U.S. Military Intelligence. Worked for the U.S.
12 Military for a while. I was educated through the Army
13 (inaudible). I worked in the nursing science for a couple years,
14 decided it was a little stressful out there a while and then went
15 to work for the National Park Service. I went to work (inaudible)
16 National Parks (inaudible) and I believe back and forth between
17 the government and the National Parks Service and the (inaudible).

18 That led me to working on vessels. I started working
19 on vessels with Leisure Cruise Lines and the general manager
20 onboard one of the vessels (inaudible). I worked with him for two
21 years. I decided I wanted to make the switch because I was, I
22 (inaudible) ocean at that time and I decided that I would set down
23 with management in the hotel and pursue a career as a deck
24 officer. The only way to do that is to start at the bottom and
25 work your way up.

1 Basically, (inaudible) wouldn't let me go as a manager,
2 so they told me to stay on through (inaudible) and work with the
3 office. I did that. They told me that when the vessel went to
4 Mexico that I could be on deck. I also worked periodically on
5 deck through (inaudible) hotel whenever I could, I volunteered on
6 deck. That way, I could start achieving some sort of sea time and
7 training so that I could be ready for (inaudible).

8 So, the transition started there. Leisure Cruise Lines
9 went under. I had been talking with the human resources director
10 (inaudible) for quite a while about working here and we felt it
11 would probably be great to get a fresh start coming in as an
12 ordinary seaman. And it was a 1600 ton boat, (inaudible) is
13 great, the training is good. So, I came to work here and I've
14 been here now for a year and a half, almost a year and a half.
15 I've been here since January of last year.

16 MR. TURRELL: Barry?

17 MR. STRAUCH: No.

18 MR. TURRELL: Okay, any other questions?

19 Okay, I'm going to end this interview. And if you would
20 just acknowledge that it was recorded, we'll end it.

21 MR. FRENCH: All right. I know the interview has been
22 recorded.

23 MR. TURRELL: Thank you.

24 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled matter
25 was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: The Investigation of
 Empress of the North
 Juneau, Alaska
 Marine Accident
 Interview of Ben French

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-07-MM-015

PLACE: Auke Bay, Alaska

DATE: May 15, 2007

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to
the recording accomplished at the hearing.

Kimberly J. Zogby
Transcriber